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SUBJECT: WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST; CUBAN TRANSITION; AMBASSADOR WAYNE
08/02/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's key international stories include the war in the Middle East and the need for putting an end to the escalation in violence; Fidel Castro's transferring power to his brother; and US Ambassador to Argentina, Earl Anthony Wayne, having to deal with local political leaders during the Argentine election campaign.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "Europe is disoriented"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" carries an op-ed piece by Juan Gabriel Tokatlán, professor of International Relations at Universidad San Andrés, who writes (08/02) "Europe's lower international stature in current world politics is apparent. Regarding any important topic or event with a global impact, Europe's position is increasingly inconsistent.

"The current crisis in the Middle East is an example that Europe not only does not offer a different alternative from that of the US, but it also lacks the aptitude of generating effective consensus...

"Divided and docile, the EU ended up 'de facto' legitimizing the humanitarian catastrophe in the Middle East.

"... In brief, Europe is disoriented, which affects its collective identity and diplomatic projection. It does not object to US arrogance, it lacks its own influence capability and does not have strategic partners aside from Washington..."

- "'The fact that Castro transfers power to his brother does not imply a transition'"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," comments (08/02) "Swaying between cautiousness and hopes that Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba is coming to an end, the Bush administration said yesterday that if the Cuban leader's sickness leads to a democratic transition, the US is ready to support it with economic and humanitarian cooperation..."

"During a press interview, US Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez warned the Cuban-American community that it should not interfere in the process, and he added that Cuban-Americans will not attempt to recover the houses they lost when they left the island.

"... Asked about a possible contradiction between the objective of the Committee for Assistance to a Free Cuba to undermine the regime's succession strategy and current statements that the USG does not want third parties to influence the transition on the island, Gutierrez answered, 'What we want is that the Cuban people

may choose their next leader. We have promoted free elections from the very beginning. We do not see any contradiction in this. It is a noble objective.'"

- "Cuba, far from the China or the Soviet Union's transition road"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" carries an opinion piece by Alvaro Vargas Llosa, head of the Center for Global Prosperity at the Independent Institute, who writes (08/02) "Whether Fidel Castro's health status is terminal or not, the Cuban transition has started. At this point, no one knows what kind of transition it will be or how long it will take, but the symbolism represented by the transfer of power to Raul Castro is enough to tell us that the half-century of one-man government is almost certainly over. What comes ahead will not be Fidel Castro's dictatorship.

"What kind of transition will Cuba have? Being a communist regime, there are five possible scenarios, and at least three of them no longer seem feasible in Cuba.

"The Chinese, the Polish and the Soviet transition models are unlikely for Cuba because they implied change, but on the island they could represent a continued state of affairs.

"... This leaves two possible transitions. One would be 'Fidelism' without Fidel. In other words, it would be a military dictatorship under Raul Castro. The real transition would not start until his death or inability... The other, more likely scenario would be the struggle for power among different factions."

- "The US will maintain the embargo while Communism prevails in Cuba"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (08/02) "With news about Fidel Castro merged in shadows, the USG announced yesterday that it is

getting ready to support a democratic transition in Cuba, but it also warned that it will maintain the trade embargo imposed on the island as long as the Communist regime prevails.

"On state of alert and in expectation of news from Havana, the White House has already dismissed the possibility of bridging gaps with Raul Castro...

"... The Republican administration tried to downplay expectations of exiled Cubans and the fears of those living in Cuba, who fear a US military invasion or the irruption of thousands of followers of Fulgencio Batista who are determined to expel them from their former properties."

- "The transition on the island has already started"

Business-financial "El Cronista" carries an opinion piece by Jorge Castro, head of the Institute for Strategic Planning, who writes (08/02) "Fidel Castro's political and military transfer of power implies a change in the nature of the political regime in force since 1959.

"... The regime has crystal-clear military features, which emerged from a history of domestic war and 'international delegations.'

"The transition has been implemented in Cuba regardless of the fact that Fidel Castro's distance from power could be temporary... and everything indicates that the Army will be the focus of the Cuban political process."

- "There was no transition but succession"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" carries an opinion piece by international columnist Jorge Elias, who writes (08/02) "There was not a transition. Castro temporarily transferred power to Castro. Therefore, there was not a transition but a succession...

"... After over four decades of a useless economic embargo, which ended up being Fidel Castro's favorite excuse, the Bush administration, through the Committee for the Assistance of a Free Cuba, is confident that a transition will end up in a democracy that

will be in alignment with the region.

"For the time being, nothing indicates that Raul Castro does have this purpose. Nothing indicates, either, that the 80 million dollars that the USG is planning to use in support for Cuban opponents will bear fruits. They have a manufacturer's shortfall - Bush's stamp.

"All those funds will be irretrievably related to Iraq in general and to Abu Ghraib in particular, Guantanamo, Katrina, and the Middle East. All those funds will be repelled by Castro's supporters in the region."

- "An exaggerated simplification"

Leading "Clarín's" general editor Ricardo Kirschbaum writes (08/02) "After overcoming the strong obstacles placed by anti-Castro Washington lobbyists to his nomination, the new US Ambassador to Buenos Aires has been confirmed and will come in September.

"Earl Anthony Wayne, one of whose first important tasks was assisting Alexander Haig in his frustrated mediation during the Malvinas (Falkland) islands war, knows the symbolic and true importance of being the White House's representative among local political leaders. Obviously enough, this real influence is part of the panorama envisioned by every local political leader of the national situation. In this world, when one speaks of 'the Embassy,' everyone knows what one is talking about and does not need any clarification whatsoever.

"Just like political leaders carefully handle their ties with the Embassy, American diplomats are also cautious, particularly with elections ahead... Recent charges against Lavagna based on his alleged meeting in Washington with a high-ranking USG official at the US Department of State... have reinforced Wayne and his aides' cautiousness.

"In the slippery times of election campaigns, there is an exaggerated tendency to oversimplify scenarios without taking into account the historic framework... As well as opponents have exaggerated official deviations, the official party reacted in the same way by seeking to recreate historic conflicts.

"In this framework, Wayne hears the word Braden and is scared away as if it were a ghost."

13. EDITORIALS

- "Stop the war in the Middle East"

An editorial in leading "Clarín" reads (08/02) "A strong diplomatic pressure and a resolute attitude of the countries having the largest influence in the Middle East should stop the escalation of violence that was unleashed by Israel's military offensive against Lebanon.

"... Israel's self-justification, which is based on the principle of legitimate defense, is weakened by the magnitude and consequences of its military offensive.

"On the other hand, the Israeli offensive will not bring larger guarantees to Israelis and implies a severe retreat and a serious blow to its harmony with Arab countries...

"It is time to remember that there are no unilateral way outs of the war in the Middle East. The international community, the US and the main countries involved should find an urgent formula for a ceasefire."

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